

# Indian Rose Annual - IRA 1995

## Rosa Gigantea Blooms In Kodaikanal

M. S. Viraraghavan

The accompanying photograph shows the first flower on a seedling of *Rosa gigantea* raised from seed collected on the footpath leading to Mount Sirohi, beyond Ukrul in Manipur State, at about 7,000 feet altitude.

*Rosa gigantea*, which the great plantsman Graham Stuart Thomas refers to as "the queen, the Empress of wild roses", is by far the largest growing of all wild roses, reaching upto 50 feet. The rose was first discovered in 1882 by Sir George Watt, Surveyor General of India, and a keen botanist, in Manipur. He charmingly describes the rose as climbing large trees and blooming in cascades from the uppermost branches, making the trees look like golden magnolias. The most interesting feature of the rose, apart from its extra-ordinary vigour, is the giant size of the flower, which is invariably cream or light yellow, (in the Manipur form), and reputed to reach 6 inches across. This species, which is rudely healthy, has contributed one of the most fascinating characteristics of the modern rose - the beautiful, high centred form. The photograph shows this aspect.

Seeds of two forms of the rose species were collected in January 1991 at Sirohi, the first with fruit (hips) about 1/2 inch across and the other much larger, well over 1 inch in diameter, hence Sir George Watts' original name *R. macrocarpa*. Seeds of both forms germinated within one month of being sown in March 1991 and about 50 seedlings, mainly of the smaller form

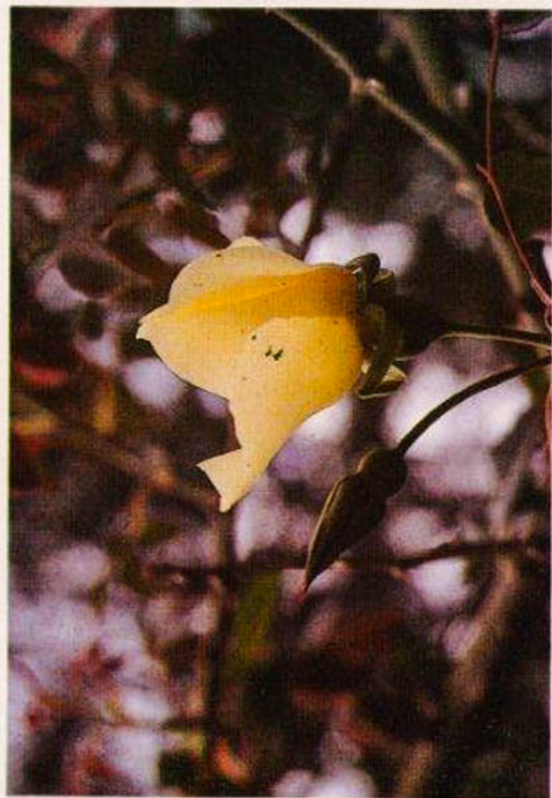
have been planted out in various places in my garden around November 1991. The first flowers were produced in November this year (1994) on a seedling of the smaller form - the first flowers were about 4 1/4 inches across.

Buds are also now visible in one of the vegetatively propagated plants of the larger form, budded on *Rosa multiflora*.

While on the subject of propagation of this rose, none of the over 100 cuttings of both forms rooted, excepting for one of the larger type. Though transplanted with the utmost care, the rooted cutting started to wilt and turn black from the root upwards. In order to save the plant, the top portion which was still green was snipped off and made into a water cutting, i.e., immersed in a glass of water and kept in a well-lit part of the greenhouse (not in the direct sun). The water in the glass was changed once a week, and astonishingly enough, after a month callus formed, and a few roots produced in 2 months time. This water cutting is now a bush some 8 feet high and hopefully, will also flower later this year.

## Copies of the original

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***R. gigantea* collected in the wild Mt. Sirohi, Manipur - M.S. Viraraghavan**

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Seeds of two forms of the rose species were collected in January 1991 at Sirohi, the first with fruit (hips) about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch across and the other much larger, well over 1 inch in diameter, hence Sir George Watts' original name *R. Macrocarpa*. Seeds of both forms germinated within one month of being sown in March 1991 and about 50 seedlings, mainly of the smaller form have been planted out in various places in my garden around

November 1991. The first flowers were produced in November this year (1994) on a seedling of the smaller form—the first flowers were about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches across.

Buds are also now visible in one of the vegetatively propagated plants of the larger form-budded on *Rosa multiflora*.

While on the subject of propagation of this rose, none of the over 100 cuttings of both forms rooted, excepting for one of the larger type. Though transplanted with the utmost care, the rooted cutting started to wilt and turn black from the root upwards. In order to save the plant, the top portion which was still green was snipped off and made into a water cutting, i.e., immersed in a glass of water and kept in a well-lit part of the greenhouse (not in the direct sun). The water in the glass was changed once a week, and astonishingly enough, after a month callus formed, and a few roots produced in 2 months time. This water cutting is now a bush some 8 feet high and hopefully, will also flower later this year.